HOSPITAL VISITS AS FIRST LADY

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Mary Todd Lincoln

Hospital Visits as First Lady

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the

Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

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From: The New York Times July 23, 1882

N.Y. Times, July 23, 1882

MRS. LINCOLN IN THE HOSPITALS.

To the Editor of the Chicago Journal:

CHICAGO, July 18.—The death of the widow of the American emancipator will cause a feeling of sorrow and sadness all over the country, but it will be a cause of particular sorrow to the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac, who, when sick or wounded in the Washington hospitals, were the objects of her especial care and attention. At the first battle of Fredericksburg I received a painful wound in the face; the bullet splintered the jaw and knocked out half a dozen teeth. I was taken to the Armory-Square Hospital, at Washington, and Dr. Bliss, who attended Gen. Garfield, was the man who saved my face from utter disfigurement. Among the many who came to the hospital to speak cheering words to the afflicted none were more kind or showed a nobler spirit than the wife of the chief magistrate of the Nation. She called regularly, bringing with her, by attendants, flowers and delicacies, and bestowing them with her own hand with a grace worthy of the station she held. The cycle of time is ended with her. She is at rest with her sorrow, but though dead she still lives in the memory of those whose agonies she soothed with loving words.

FRANK G. THOMPSON.

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
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MRS. LINCOLN AND "YOUR SOLDIER BOY"

In the little personal notes that passed between Abraham Lincoln and his wife during the White House days, he often addressed her as "mother." It is to be regretted that she has not been allowed to occupy this reverent role in the thinking of the American people, but possibly in the atmosphere of "Mother's Day" her most ardent critics will not begrudge her this brief tribute.

There seems to have been few attempts to gather and emphasize some of the commendable things that Mary Lincoln did, and it was refreshing, indeed, to come across a brief personal reminiscence of her by Howard Glyndon appearing in *The Independent* for August 10, 1882. He writes:

"She was very generous to the sick soldiers in camp and in the hospitals around Washington. I remember many of her voluntary and unsolicited deeds of kindness, and she visited the camps and hospitals frequently. These were not the things which it suited the convenience of her defamers to have a cognizance of, or to allow to go on record. I am ashamed that today nothing of Mary Lincoln's goodness of heart in this respect nor the sums of money spent by her and by Mr. Lincoln for the sick and suffering during the war is remembered or spoken of."

A more important reference to Mrs. Lincoln's motherly attitude toward the soldiers is told in a story released in the *Chicago Times Herald* in June 1897. A reporter interviewed James H. Agen, a Civil War soldier, and learned that he had in his possession a valuable letter written to his mother. Upon being questioned for more detail about the letter Mr. Agen told the following story:

"Let me tell you a story before answering your double question: In 1864, while following Grant near Richmond, and when we had come so close to it that they could hear our muskets, and we their church bells, I was stricken with a fever and sent to hospital. In time they landed me, more dead than alive, in one of the great hospitals at Washington. I was a very sick boy. Boy is right, for that was all I was—sweet 16, as a girl of that age would be. For three weeks I had no ambition to live.

"One day, after I had passed the danger point, and was taking a little notice of what was going on, a number of ladies came through the hospital. They had baskets containing delicacies and bouquets of beautiful flowers. One of them stopped at each cot as they passed along. A bunch of blossoms was handed to each sick or wounded soldier, and if he desired it a delicacy of some kind was also distributed. Every now and then one of the women sat in a camp chair and wrote a letter for the poor fellow who hadn't the strength to write himself.

"I wanted nothing to eat or drink, but those pretty posies held my attention. One of the ladies stopped at my cot. I hadn't yet got my full growth, and in my then emaciated, pale condition I must have looked like a child. She seemed surprised as she looked at me.

"'You poor child, what brought you here?'

"'They sent me here from the Army of the Potomac.'

"'But you are not a soldier?'

"'Yes, madam. I belong to a New York regiment. The surgeon here has the record.'

"'Can I do anything for you? Can you eat something or take a swallow of wine?'

"'I'm not hungry or thirsty.'

"'Can I write a letter for you?'

"'Not to-day. I'm too weak.'

"'Then I will leave some of these flowers with you. President Lincoln helped to cull them. I will come again in two or three days. Keep up your courage. You are going to get well. You must get well.'

"She was the first woman who had spoken to me since I had reached the army. Looking at the sweet flowers which Mr. Lincoln had 'helped to cull,' and thinking of the dear woman who had spoken so kindly and hopefully had more effect in brightening my spirits than all else that had occurred in the hospital.

"Three days later the same lady came again, and direct to my cot.

"'How is my little soldier boy to-day?' she asked in a way so motherly that it reminded me of my good mother back in New York, the patriot mother who had given her consent to my going to the war after praying over the matter many times. The hospital angel—that was what we learned to call those noble women—after giving me a taste of chicken and jelly, asked me if I had a mother. She saw by the tears in my eyes that I had.

"'Now we will write mother a letter.'

"Then she sat by my side and wrote the letter. I hadn't been able to write for a month.

"'I have told your mother that I am near her soldier boy and have talked with him. What shall I tell her for you? That you are still too weak to write yourself?'

"'Please don't tell her that. It will make her worry. Tell her I am fast getting well.'

"The first day I got home my mother asked me how I liked Mrs. Lincoln, the President's wife.

"'I never met Mrs. Lincoln. What made you think I had?'

"Then she took from a box closely guarded in an old bureau a letter. It read like this:

"'Dear Mrs. Agen: I am sitting by the side of your soldier boy. He has been quite sick, but is getting well. He tells me to say to you that he is all right. With respect for the mother of the young soldier.

"'Mrs. Abraham Lincoln.'

"That was the first that I knew that it was the President's wife who had made me those two visits. I begged my mother to give me the letter. 'You can have it when I am gone.' When she died, a box and an old letter folded in a silk handkerchief were among her gifts to me.

"The box, kerchief and letter will pass along the Agen line as mementos too sacred for everyday display."

statement appears in *Lincoln Lore*, Number 1579, September, 1969, Lincoln's Law Offices In The Tinsley Building 1843-1852: "When one attempts to define the precise location of the Lincoln-Herndon law office during the entire period of the firm's existence, there is some confusion. This is due to the fact that several . . . issues of the *Illinois State Journal* are missing which would have shown a change, if they had moved, in their business card."

Even the Micro Photo Division of Bell & Howell, who have micro film of the *Illinois State Journal* from June 16, 1848, to December 30, 1865, (35 reels) available for sale, advises its prospective customers that missing from the files are the numbers from September 14, 1843, through December and June 20-30, 1855, and July 1-9, of the same year.

Editor's Note: For a more complete description of the files of the *Illinois State Journal*, consult the publication titled, "Newspapers in the Illinois State Historical Library," edited by William E. Keller, reprinted from *Illinois Libraries*, June, 1970, by the Illinois State Historical Library, page 543.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S SEAL
(A Good Investment)

On October 25, 1967, Abraham Lincoln's Official Seal of the United States sold for $12,000. It was a part of the Justin G. Turner collection sold at the Charles Hamilton Auction (see catalogue No. 22) at the Waldorf Astoria. The seal was used by Lincoln while president.

The item is described as follows: "the seal ¾" in diameter and inscribed in brass, mounted on a carved ivory handle (age yellowed and with a few tiny cracks), bearing a circular design on its top. The overall height is about 3¼". Contained in a special folding case made by Atmore Beach of brown morocco with inner linings of beige moire silk, gilt stamped on spine, 'Abraham Lincoln's Presidential Seal,' and on front cover, 'Justin G. Turner Collection.'" The pre-sale estimated value of the relic was $2,000.

The seal had previously been sold by the Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc. on February 19-20, 1952, at the time of the disposition of the collection of the late Oliver R. Barrett, of Chicago, Illinois. The item listed as Number 284 on page 122 of the sale catalogue gives the following description: "Seal of the United States used by Abraham Lincoln while President, ivory handle with brass seal. Height 3¼ inches. With card inscribed: 'Seal used by Abraham Lincoln when President. W. H. Crook'. Accompanying is a printed invitation of Mr and Mrs Abraham Lincoln to 'Mrs. Goddard' in an envelope, with a wax impression of the above seal. The envelope is defective. Illustrated in Sandburg, *Lincoln Collector*, facing p. 145."

The Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc. did not estimate the value of the various items offered for sale, which appears to be no longer the practice of most auction houses. The seal sold for $650.

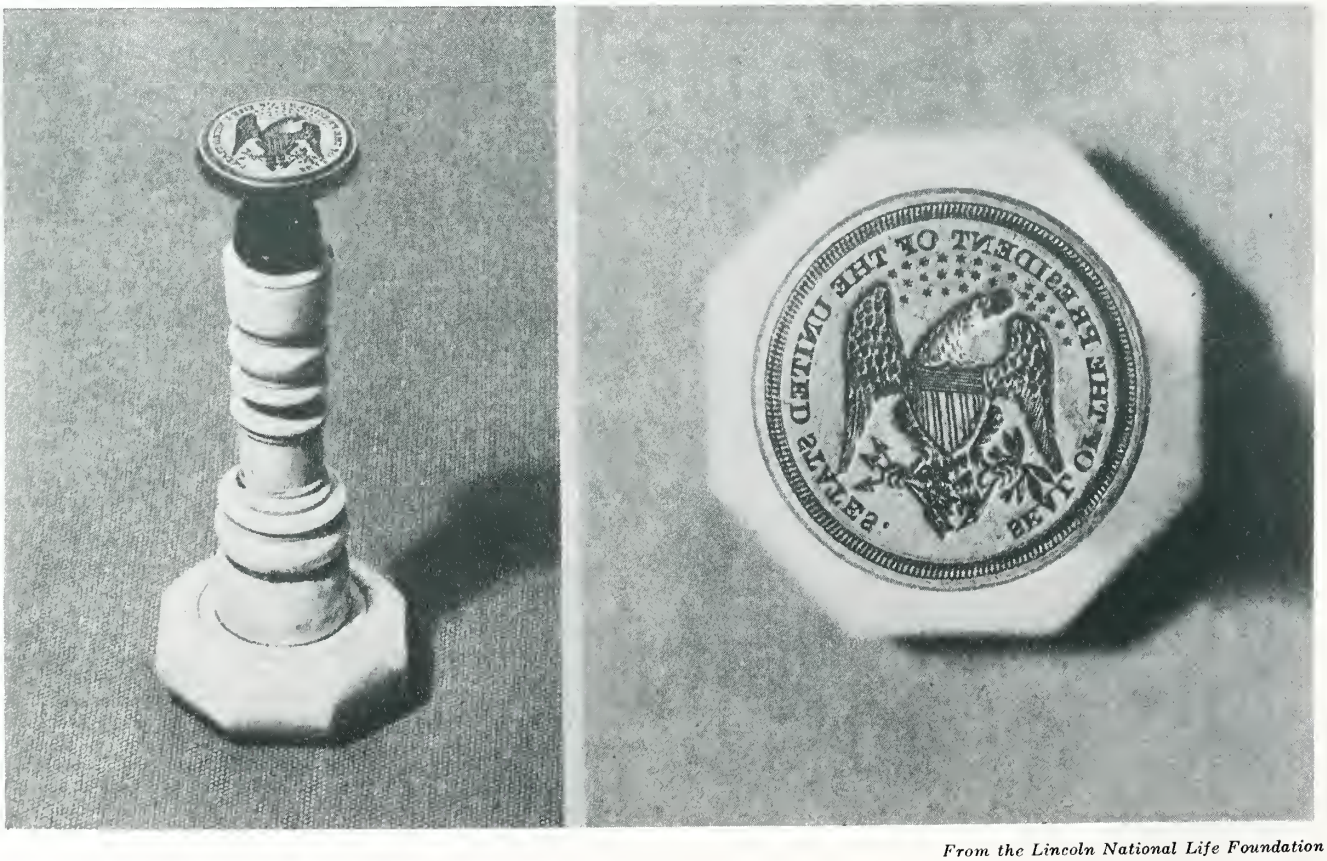
Thus the purchaser of the relic at the Barrett sale realized a 1746% gain on his investment. Perhaps the same can be said of the estate of the late Anna Thompson Dodge, who sold through Christie's on June 24, 1971, a French 18th century writing table for $415,800.

Mrs. Lincoln Among The Sick And Wounded

Among the many ladies who visit our sick soldiers with cheerful words and offices, none are more indefatigable than Mrs. Lincoln. She, yesterday, visited the Odd Fellows Hall Hospital, Navy Yard, much to the gratification of the sufferers there, and kindly administered to their wants in various ways — bestowing gifts, kind words and, among others, Mrs. Lincoln visited the bedside of one old soldier, over sixty years of age, who had expressed a desire to see her. After some conversation, she bestowed upon the old soldier a handsome donation. Her visit will long be remembered by the invalids.

Washington Star
August 29, 1862

Note: On August 12, 1862, Mrs. Lincoln received from a Boston merchant a donation of $1,000 for relief work in military hospitals. On August 16, 1862, a request was made of Hiram Barney to buy $200 worth of lemons and $100 worth of oranges for Mrs. Lincoln to distribute to hospitals. *Lincoln Day By Day - A Chronology* 1809-1865, Volume III: 1861-1865, pages 133-134.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Two different views of Lincoln's official seal which, if price is an index, must be one of the most valuable Lincoln relics in existence today.

The pictures are arranged chronologically around Homer's works engraved for "Harper's Weekly," the leading illustrated review of that time. A brief apprenticeship with a Boston lithographer and a few art lessons in New York City had been the extent of his formal art training, but at age 21 he was already being published by "Harper's" as well as other pictorial media. He covered Lincoln's inauguration for the magazine and when hostilities between the North and South broke out, he was sent to the front as its "special artist."

During the next four years the battleground became both his school and his studio. At first he thrilled to the drama and heroism of battle, depicting what he saw with remarkable realism, but as the war dragged on, he recoiled from the scenes of death and turned to life among the men in camp, with its moments of humor, camaraderie and boredom.

Homer's art brought the look and feel of the war home to his countrymen. Although he accompanied the Union Army and presented the war from the Northern viewpoint, he fully saw the tragedy in civil warfare and honestly portrayed both victor and vanquished with the same compassion and dignity.

The 198 reproductions of Winslow Homer's Civil War art show his extraordinary skill with pencil, brush and engraving tools. The oil, "Pitching Horseshoes," showing Zouaves at play in camp, is Homer at his best in technique and coloring. His pencil sketches of men in motion are particularly realistic and one can almost feel the anxiety and tenseness that must have been the lot of every soldier.

This is a superb book, capably edited, and it is a fine addition to Civil War bibliography.

—Allan McMahan
Fort Wayne *Journal Gazette*
January 5, 1975

An Eyewitness Account of a Visit By President and Mrs. Lincoln To Campbell Hospital, Washington, D.C.

On many occasions President Abraham Lincoln and Mrs. Lincoln visited the sick and wounded soldiers in Washington, D.C. hospitals. One such visit was to the Campbell Hospital in the capitol city. The date was May 29, 1864. It was Dr. Darius Orton, a Federal Army surgeon in charge of one of the Campbell Hospital wards, who recorded the events of the presidential visit in his personal journal. Even though this visit is not mentioned in *Lincoln Day By Day - A Chronology,* Vol. III, 1861-1864, the hand written record of Dr. Orton (pages 68-69) leaves no doubt as to the accuracy of the report.

While a hospital visit is of no great historical significance, all eye-witness accounts of Lincoln's activities during his presidency are of importance to students.

The medical journal of Dr. Orton has recently been acquired by Norm Flayderman of New Milford, Connecticut, who has kindly given permission to the editors of the *Lincoln Herald* to publish the information on those pages relative to the Lincolns.

With considerable difficulty, the facsimile pages of the journal have been transcribed with some omissions, particularly those words relative to medical terms.

George L. Chase, Pr. Co D. 36th Mass. Vols. Regt. Admitted May 27, 1864. Description of wound - Gunshot wound of Right Knee - received in action at Wilderness, May 6, 1864. Operation performed May 29th in Campbell Hospital - By Dr. Sheldon Surg. in charge - When this patient was admitted he showed every symptom of recovery - the knee joint was not opened - and it was not until several days had passed that erysipilas set in and inflamed the joint to such a degree that amputation was certainly indicated - The amputation was performed - and I had just brought him in from the operating room - when Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln came through the Hospital. They came into my ward just as he was recovering from the effects of the anesthetic when she came along where he lay - she took him by the hand and the Dr. told him that it was Mrs. Lincoln - he cried out how do you do Mrs. Lincoln - Oh! I am so glad to see you - she petted the poor boy a few moments - gave him a bouquet of flowers - Uncle Abe took him by the hand - bid him good bye and left - he never rallied from the shock - or at least only partially. The Knee when amputated was very badly swollen - painful. None of us had much hope for a recovery. The treatment was good diet ... Iron ... and plenty of good Beef elexir. Sodium was painted on the limb but to no use he sank gradually and died from Pyemia, June 17, 1864.

I made a post mortem Examination after death and found large absesses in various parts of the body and also the sup (superior) lobe of the Left Lung filled with Tubercule in the 2 degree of softening - the other organs were normal.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The editor is indebted to Donald C. Chambers, M.D. of the Medical Department of the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company for his help in transcribing the manuscript.

MRS. LINCOLN GAVE THIS PICTURE OF THE PRESIDENT TO WOUNDED CIVIL WAR SOLDIER

BRENER

WHEN SHE VISITED WASHINGTON D.C. HOSPITAL

BRENNER WAS IN THE CIVIL WAR THREE YEARS, 4 MONTHS. DIED IN 1887, HIS DAUGHTERS, MARILLA BRENER OF DUNDEE N.Y. PRESENTED IT TO W. S. ORR OF BATAVIA, IN 1940, THEN TO ME, LLOYD OSTENDORF (1957) [O-91]

Original photograph (CDV) in Ostendorf box 1, in folder O-91